

volumes of the size of the present may be better suited to the demand. Whether this be the case or not, we decidedly wish Dr. Morton to enlarge his subsequent editions; nothing doubting that such will be called for; and he will then be able, not only to add new facts to his publication, but to enlarge, explain and develop various parts of what he has already inserted. We are confident that the public will welcome such an enlargement; and that the work, without denying imperfections, will be considered as an honourable and desirable acquisition to American pathology.

B. H. C.

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XIX. *Memoir of the Life, Writings, and Correspondence of JAMES CURRIE, M.D., F. R. S. of Liverpool, &c.* Edited by his son, WILLIAM WALLACE CURRIE. In two vols. 8vo. London. 1831.

The very distinguished services rendered to medical science by the late Dr. Currie, his eminent literary talents, his elegant compositions, and the acute powers of criticism displayed by him, as well as the importance of his political writings, the elevated position he enjoyed in society, and the esteem and affection in which he was held by many of the most celebrated men, in useful and polite learning, who adorned during the latter part of the last and the commencement of the present centuries, the country of his birth and of his adoption, entitle him in every way to the high respect of the members of that profession of which he was undeniably one of the brightest ornaments. Influenced by this opinion, and presuming that such of the readers of this Journal as are aware of the merits of Dr. Currie as a medical philosopher and practitioner, will find pleasure in perusing a sketch of the events of his life, and an enumeration of his services in science and literature; while those who have not yet become familiar with these, will be gratified at being possessed of information on a subject of such deep interest; we have prepared a brief and condensed analysis of the two volumes of memoirs of the life, writings, and correspondence of that distinguished man, for which, as the title indicates, we are indebted to his son.

Prepared, as they are, for the press by one having access to the most correct sources of information, they must be considered as entitled to entire confidence, in regard, at least, to all the events and facts they record. But even had we not the reason of the close relationship of the author to the subject of these memoirs, to lead to the conclusion of the authentic nature of the information they contain, we would feel disposed to place reliance on their accuracy, and to form a favourable opinion of their merits, learning as we do, from a recent publication,\* that they received the unqualified approbation of William Roscoe, long the intimate friend of Dr. Currie, and whose testimony, from this circumstance as well as from his great literary renown, must naturally be regarded as of great weight on a question of this nature.

Dr. James Currie, the subject of the present memoir, was descended from a race of Scottish borderers. He was the only son of a respectable clergyman, and was born at the manse of Kirkpatrick-Fleming, in Annandale, on the 31st of May, 1756. He received the rudiments of his education under his father's eye, at the parish school of the above-named place, and afterwards at that of Middlebie, in the same county, to which latter parish his father was translated, and of which he continued minister till his death.

\* *Life of W. Roscoe*, Vol. II. pp. 310-11, Am. Ed.

"As a child, although his spirit was fearless and impetuous, and his admiration of military adventure and martial glory enthusiastic, he was retiring and thoughtful, fond of study, and preferring a solitary ramble by the river-side, or among the neighbouring woods, to the ordinary pursuits of children. The greater part of his eighth year he spent at Allerbeck, in the family of Mr. Irving, a friend and connexion of his father's; and there he appears to have imbibed a taste for natural scenery." In a manuscript account of himself, which, however he did not carry further than a few pages, he makes the following remarks.

"This place, (Allerbeck,) is beautifully situated among growing woods on the banks of the Kirtle, my parent stream; and there my taste for the beauties of nature first began to expand, and my memory became first impressed with those rural images, which associate so pleasingly with the recollections of infancy, and serve as a sort of solace under the cares and troubles of after life.

"In the neighbourhood of Allerbeck stands or stood in those days, the tower of the Blacket-house, a small border fortress belonging to the family of the Bells, and well known in the traditionary records of the border wars. It was uninhabited, at least by mortal beings, being partly in ruins; but was the residence of a bogle or brownie, a spirit well known in the history of Scottish superstitions, of whom many adventures were related. About half a mile or less above the house of Allerbeck, the river Kirtle has on its east bank a small and beautiful but sequestered holm, the bank immediately opposite rising to a considerable height, and at that time covered with a thick wood. On the top of this bank stood the tower of the Blacket-house, the residence of this demon. On the summer's evening I have sometimes lingered in the holm, gazing on the ruins of the tower above, in the expectation of seeing this aerial being; but though he was active in those days, and had appeared to many persons, I never had a glimpse of him. I heard him indeed, or was told I heard him, at times, felling timber, or seeming to do so, on the opposite bank in the night; and, though nothing seemed more distinct than the sound of the woodman's axe, and the crash of the falling trees, yet it was said the whole was delusion, for that in the morning no injury could be found. There were those, indeed, who held that these sounds were occasioned by real depredators on the wood, who carried off their plunder in the night, and who encouraged the belief of the noise being preternatural to prevent their robberies from being interrupted at the time, or particularly inquired into afterwards. The landlord was at a distance, and the tenants themselves were suspected to have a share in the plunder."

"These and other similar incidents made me early acquainted with the superstitions of the Scottish borders, a subject in which I have felt some interest, and which has been so amusingly treated by Mr. Walter Scott."

Young Currie remained until 1769, in which year he lost his mother, at the parish school of Middlebie, under different teachers, enjoying at the same time the advantage of his father's instructions, who was an excellent scholar, and a man of extensive reading, and much general information. During his mother's last illness he was removed to Dumfries, and placed under the care of Dr. Chapman, who, at that time, conducted the grammar-school of that place with reputation and success. The news of her death arrived there on the day of the annual examination of that institution, and was unintentionally communicated to him at the moment he was about to pronounce an oration before the presbytery and magistrates. For doing this, it naturally disqualified him. He remained in the house of Dr. Chapman some time after he had finished his course in the school, studying mathematics and some part of practical geometry.

"Of his companions at this school," his biographer remarks, "only one now

survives—Alexander Young, Esq. of Edinburgh, who in a recent letter to the editor, says, ‘I am now the only survivor of four most intimate friends at Dumfries school and Edinburgh college. With Dr. William Charles Wells, Dr. George Bell, and myself, your father was always the greatest favourite, all the rest of us were somewhat precipitate and pugnacious, but your father was the peace maker, and the great cement of our mutual friendship, till he went to America; and most sincerely did I rejoice when he returned, and found his old friends at this University, where he soon surpassed us all, and became again the bond of peace and mutual union among us. My intimacy with and sincere regard and affection for him remained undiminished till the day of his death.’”

At the age of about fifteen he accompanied his father to Glasgow, and while in that city caught the spirit of enterprize common among his young countrymen. His original destination was the profession of medicine; but his father was induced to yield to his desire of going out to America in the service of some merchant. He accordingly embarked for Virginia, in 1771, and on his arrival, was established at Cabin point, a small settlement on James’ river.

“This important step had a striking effect upon the formation of his future character. The period when it was taken was pregnant with mighty events, which called into action and improved every faculty of his youthful mind. Separated from his friends, deriving no advantages from the character and dispositions, or society of the individuals to whose charge he was, at that early age, intrusted; exposed at times to disappointments and difficulty, and even danger; and thrown into situations where he was compelled to act for himself, unsatisfied by the counsel or experience of others, his knowledge of mankind was speedily extended, his judgment matured, his power of decision strengthened, and his habit of self-command acquired.”

During his residence in Virginia he frequently laboured under the ordinary diseases of the country, and especially suffered much from the intermittent fever. He soon found that his employment was uncongenial to his taste, and that his hopes of advancement were, to all appearances, not likely soon to be realised. When he had been two years in America, his father died, leaving a large family but ill provided for—a circumstance which added much to the anxiety which his own situation inspired. His feelings on this occasion, and a detail of the events of the period, were conveyed by him in numerous letters to some of his friends. These letters are published in the volumes before us, and will be read with interest, but they cannot be inserted in this brief notice. Notwithstanding the adverse circumstances under which Mr. Currie was then placed, he discharged his duty to his employers with undiminished attention. He thereby acquired their confidence and approbation, and in more tranquil times, as his biographer remarks, he might have pursued the mercantile profession with success.

“Habit had reconciled him to a spot where he had now made many friends, in whose society he was comparatively happy; and it appears that he was likely to form some connexions in business which held out the prospect of great advantage. But the storm approached, which was, in its course, to destroy the ordinary pursuits of life, and to render the colony an overwhelming scene of tumult and agitation, in the midst of which commercial success was remote, if not hopeless, and neutrality of conduct was impossible.”

His letters during this period evince the light in which he contemplated the struggle, and from them it is found, that although he regarded the noble spec-

tacle of an infant nation "starting forth into independence with that strong interest which is congenial to every generous heart," the youthful attachments and prejudices of Currie were entirely British. He disapproved, however, of the arbitrary measures of the British authorities, and began to entertain serious ideas of returning home—sensible that all expectations of success in his commercial pursuits were at an end, and finding that "neither his feelings nor his judgment would allow him to take any part in the existing differences."

At the beginning of these troubles he had gone to reside with a near relation, Dr. James Currie, a distinguished physician of Richmond. While staying with this gentleman, he determined to change his line of life, and to adopt the profession of medicine. It was in consequence arranged that he should, as soon as possible, embark for Europe to pursue his studies in Edinburgh, and, after graduating, return to practice in the capital of Virginia.

"This resolution, previous to its being carried into effect, was the cause of involving him in multiplied difficulties, and of putting his life into danger; but in the most critical situations he displayed that judgment and decision which began to mark his character, and for which it was conspicuous in after life."

The circumstances attending his departure are given in a letter to the Rev. G. Duncan, written after Mr. Currie's return to Scotland; but the details are too long for insertion in this place. Let it suffice to state, that he embarked in September 1776, that after a passage of about six weeks he arrived at St. Eustatia, and that he immediately proceeded to Antigua. From thence he sailed for Europe, in February, 1777, and after touching at several islands in the way—Montserrat, Nevis, and St. Kitts, and putting in at Fayal, on account of the sinking condition of his vessel, he reached Deptford on the second of May following. After remaining a few weeks in London, he joined his aunt and sisters in Edinburgh, just as he had reached the age of twenty-one.

"From the time of his arrival in Edinburgh, until he took his degree, Mr. Currie was with few intervals, a constant resident at the University. In the winter following he entered on the study of medicine, to which his application was ardent and unremitting, although unfortunately interrupted for a time in the spring of 1778, by a severe rheumatic fever. Every hour not passed at the classes, or in attendance on the hospitals, was given to study and mental improvement. He became a member of the medical society, before which he read, (amongst other pieces exhibiting strong marks of ability and acute observation,) two separate papers on the effect of cold on the living body in health, its operation as inducing disease, and its influence as a remedy; by which he acquired considerable credit, and which prove that his attention was early directed to the subject of his subsequent work—the 'Medical Reports.' He was also an active member of the physical society, and of the speculative society, where his reputation for talents and eloquence as a speaker long survived his departure from college. His indefatigable industry as a medical student attracted the notice of the different professors; and amongst these he was distinguished by the flattering kindness of the illustrious Dr. Cullen."

Nor was Mr. Currie's attention directed to medical studies only. He succeeded, during this period of his life, in cultivating his taste for general literature, and gained an intimate knowledge of the best poets and historians in his own language. He applied himself also, with peculiar interest, to metaphysical studies, and became deeply versed in the theories of Berkeley, Locke, Hume, and Reid, and for some years the philosophy of the human mind was a favourite

subject for the exercise of his mental powers. "He seems too, at this time, to have paid great attention to composition, and the style of his letters and essays exhibit much of the accuracy and ease of expression for which his subsequent writings have been admired."

After the requisite period of attendance at the University and Hospital, Mr. Currie finished his medical education with honour and distinction, and was qualified, on graduation, to commence his professional career as a physician. Fearing, however, lest by sitting down to seek employment in that capacity he should continue for some time longer his dependence on those near relations, "whose generous assistance was ill proportioned to their means," he resolved to embrace the first opportunity which might offer to relieve them of expense on his account, and accordingly determined to seek a medical appointment in the army. He was nominated by General Sir William Erskine to be surgeon's mate in his own regiment, with the rank of ensign. Hearing, about this time, that it was the intention of government to form a medical staff in Jamaica, he became desirous of obtaining an appointment as physician to the expedition. As the latter was to sail in a few weeks, and the stated day for conferring degrees at the University of Edinburgh was some months distant, he repaired to Glasgow, where no such impediment existed, and there, after a compliance with the accustomed forms, received his diploma in April, 1780.

Dr. Currie enlisted much interest in support of his intended application, and proceeded to London provided with the recommendations and best wishes of the professors of the university and of many other friends. But upon his arrival in the metropolis, he found that the influence of the surgeon-general had procured the situation in question for another young physician of acknowledged merit. He determined, nevertheless, in pursuance of his intention upon quitting his friends, to proceed at all events to Jamaica, and endeavour to establish himself in practice in that island, from which he might, if unsuccessful, find many opportunities of passing over to Virginia. He took his passage, accordingly, in the fleet about to sail; but various delays occurred to prevent its departure, and were the cause of his spending a great part of the summer in London, where he extended his acquaintance among individuals of distinction in the literary world, as well as of eminence in his own profession. But although determined to prosecute his plan of going to Jamaica, he had not concealed from his friends his desire of remaining, if possible, in England.

"He wrote particularly to his near relation, Dr. James Currie, of Chester, who had been then some time settled in practice in that city, and who was commencing that eminent and successful professional career which has so greatly distinguished a long life of activity and usefulness. To his intimate college companion, Dr. Richard Worthington, of Wrexham, he also wrote; and from each of these zealous friends he received a pressing invitation to visit them, accompanied by earnest remonstrance against his going abroad, and by their opinion, that, with a proper opening, his success at home was by no means doubtful. Accepting their invitation, he repaired to Chester, and on his arrival there he learned that both Manchester and Liverpool presented favourable prospects for a young physician. After a short visit to the former place, he at once decided upon selecting Liverpool as the field of his practice; and accompanied by Dr. Currie, for the purpose of being personally introduced to the different friends of the latter, he established himself in that town in October, 1780."

Through the great exertions and kindness of Dr. Currie, who procured him numerous introductions, his acquaintance in Liverpool soon became very general, and although he was not at first pleased with the society of that city, as it then existed—finding, as he stated, the men shy in their manners, with ideas and opinions very different from those to which his college studies had accustomed him, and unrefined in their tastes and pleasures—he became gradually reconciled to the place, and soon gained the esteem and confidence of the inhabitants. His friend Dr. George Bell, a young physician of extraordinary talents and uncommon character, settled at Manchester, in March, 1781. This event promised to be a source of much happiness to Dr. Currie, and it was soon arranged that frequent meetings should take place between them at Warrington. These meetings were continued until interrupted by the untimely death of Dr. Bell. In April of the same year, (1781,) Dr. Currie was elected one of the physicians to the Dispensary—

“And though his unanimous election after only six months’ residence in Liverpool is a proof of the zeal and activity of his friends, as well as of his own exertions, it must be to be likewise an indication of the growing impression of the public in favour of his medical skill and character. A man endowed with mediocrity of talents might, indeed, succeed against a rival of greater abilities than himself, but it is not likely that such a man would be chosen entirely without opposition.”

Dr. Currie became a member of several associations, and among these of two card clubs! and a bowling-green club; all of which he joined to extend his acquaintance, and conciliate the good feelings of the inhabitants among whom a taste for such amusements was very general. He belonged also to a weekly literary society. But, except the last, he attended none of these meetings regularly, being much occupied by his duties at the Dispensary and entering a good deal into general company.

“The reëstablishment of the literary society, which he was the principal means of reviving in a new form, and which held its first meeting at his lodgings, was a source of peculiar pleasure to him, as it gave an impulse to his literary pursuits, and brought him into acquaintance, subsequently ripened into friendship, with men whose names have contributed to confer a character on the town of Liverpool. Mr. Roscoe, Mr. Rathbone, the Rev. John Yates, Professor Smyth, (of Cambridge,) the Rev. W. Shephard, and other intelligent and estimable individuals were members of this society at its commencement, or in the course of its duration. On Dr. Currie’s election as president, he delivered an address from the chair, on the objects of such societies and on the mode of best conducting their proceedings. This address he was requested to publish as a preface to the laws of the society, and he at first consented to do so, correcting it with that design, but from diffidence he afterwards abandoned his intention.

“The meetings of the literary society were continued for eight or nine years, but some time after the commencement of the French revolution, although it was a rule that no political subject should be discussed, it was thought prudent, owing to the heated state of the public mind produced by that event, that they should cease.”

Towards the middle of the year 1781, the ravages of the small-pox engaged the attention of the medical profession in Liverpool. They were strongly in favour of a system of general inoculation, and Dr. Currie, who took an active interest in the measure, was appointed to draw up an address to the inhabitants.

Prosecuting with zeal the duties of his arduous profession, his success was equal to his deserts, and a few years residence in Liverpool firmly established his reputation for talents, and for those qualities which merit general esteem, while an intimate acquaintance procured him the confidence and affection of his friends.

In January, 1783, his happiness was increased, and his prospects of independence and professional success materially improved, by his marriage with the daughter of Mr. William Wallace, an Irish gentleman, established as a merchant in Liverpool, and who, as the biographer takes good care to inform his readers, was lineally descended, (as well as his wife, who was his cousin german,) from the Scottish hero of that name. The pleasures resulting from this event and from his success in his profession, was, however, destined to receive a check from a source little to have been anticipated. In January, 1784, Dr. Currie was called to Manchester to attend his friend Dr. Bell, who, after a rapid illness, which baffled the skill of his physicians, sank under his disease. The consequence of his travelling by night at a peculiarly severe season, and of exposure to the combined influence of agitation, loss of rest, and intense anxiety, was an alarming illness—"cough and spitting of blood, the attendants of pleurisy, and frequent precursors of consumption." By active depletion, the violence of his complaint was arrested, "but it left him in a state of debility that seemed, in his own mind, too clearly to forebode that he also should be a victim to consumption, in addition to those of his family who had died, or were dying, of this fatal disease." In compliance with the wishes of his friends, and more as a duty than from any sanguine expectation of benefit, he undertook a journey to Bristol.

"His recovery was for some time doubtful, and was retarded by many distressing causes operating on his spirits, at a time when his enfeebled frame could scarcely support existence. What contributed at length most essentially to the removal of his complaint was gentle exercise, chiefly on horseback. A very full account of his case, with his own observations upon it, and of the state of his mind when the issue was uncertain, was published in the *Zoonomia*, some years afterwards."

A short time after his return to Liverpool, he was requested by the members of the Manchester Philosophical Society, to write a memoir of Dr. Bell, accompanied by a translation of a thesis by the latter, on the physiology of plants, by which he acquired great credit in the University of Edinburgh. This painful task Dr. C. promised to undertake, and after a delay of a few months, occasioned by the feeble state of his health, he was enabled to complete it. "This memoir, which was Dr. Currie's first appearance publicly as an author, placed him at once in a high rank in point of literary composition." It was published in the second volume of the Transactions of the above-mentioned society, and is given in the appendix of the work before us. From his letters to his friends we find, that the state of Dr. Currie's health continued for a long time extremely uncertain, and that his progress towards recovery was slow and feeble.

Dr. Currie took an active part in the efforts made in the early part of the year 1787, and subsequently, by those who endeavoured to promote the abolition of the African slave trade, and partook of the feelings which animated the great majority of the British on this important subject. As the town of Liver-



pool was at that time, chiefly remarkable for the extent to which it was concerned in this traffic, his position was of extreme difficulty and delicacy. But Dr. Currie was not one of those enthusiasts and fanatics who were anxious to arrive at their ends, be the consequences what they might. He knew that many of those engaged in the trade were generous, affectionate, and humane in private life; liberal, enterprising, and intelligent in public; and it did not escape his observation that the general indignation against the *trade itself* was equally directed against the *individuals* concerned in it, without allowance for the circumstances in which they might be placed. "He abhorred the slave trade, but he was anxious that excess of enthusiasm and ardent feeling should not injure the cause." Under such impressions, but without communicating his intentions to any of his mercantile friends, he wrote a letter to Mr. Wilberforce, in which he enforced those views with much eloquence. This letter produced a friendly reply from Mr. W. and was the occasion of a correspondence at different intervals respecting the slave trade. By temperance in conduct and language, he contributed to advance the cause in Liverpool, and to aid the efforts of Mr. Roscoe, Mr. Rathbone, the Rev. John Yates, and many others of its distinguished advocates. He was a joint author, with Mr. Roscoe, of *The African*, a poem which appeared anonymously in the London papers of March, 1788, and which produced much sensation at the period.

In 1786, Dr. Currie was made one of the physicians to the Liverpool Infirmary—an institution which always received his most zealous support and attention. In 1789, a proposal was made to erect a Lunatic Asylum in connexion with the latter, and a public meeting of the subscribers unanimously recommended the adoption of the measure to the benevolent support of the public. On this occasion Dr. Currie took a leading part and published two letters in favour of the measure, which were much admired. The asylum was erected in 1790. Nor were his exertions restricted to matters of local interest. In the last-mentioned year, the dissenters throughout the kingdom made a general application to parliament for the repeal of those obnoxious laws, the corporation and test laws.

"Resolutions on the subject were passed unanimously by the dissenters of Liverpool, which were drawn up by Dr. Currie, whose friends and connexions lay very much among that body, and which were received with respect, even by those who were strongly opposed to the repeal. They were distinguished for the moderation of temper and language in which they were expressed."

"Among those friends whom Dr. Currie had the happiness to possess, there was none with whom he lived in habits of greater intimacy than Mr. Roscoe, or to whom he was more strongly attached. Their friendship was cemented by a common taste for literature and intellectual pursuits, and by the congeniality of their sentiments on many important subjects which affect the welfare of the human race. In after life, their names became associated in the literary world. Few strangers of eminence arrived at Liverpool without an introduction to Mr. Roscoe and Dr. Currie; and their houses were the resort of men of learning and celebrity from all quarters. In closest intimacy and friendship with them lived Mr. William Rathbone, a man, for whose generous ardour in the cause of civil and religious liberty, native eloquence, fearless vindication of the oppressed, public spirit, and extensive charity, they both felt equal respect and admiration."

In the year 1790, Mr. Roscoe and Dr. Currie commenced a series of essays



under the title of *The Recluse*. They appeared in the *Liverpool Weekly Herald*, but were not continued beyond twenty—the greater number of these being written by Mr. Roscoe. Two years after Dr. Currie took an interest in a very great public question, which engaged the attention of his fellow townsmen—the opening of the trade to India. On this occasion a public meeting unanimously adopted and passed a series of resolutions and petitions, which were drawn up by Dr. Currie.

“While Dr. Currie’s talents were thus exerted out of the immediate sphere of his profession, his medical reputation was at the same time steadily increasing. In 1790 he had been elected a member of the London Medical Society, when he wrote a paper on Tetanus and Convulsive Disorders, which was published in their Transactions. And in the present year, (1792,) he was chosen a Fellow of the Royal Society and also of the Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh. On the first of these occasions, he communicated a very curious ‘Account of the Remarkable Effects of a Shipwreck,’ which appeared in the Transactions of the learned body in question, and which contains the groundwork of his *Medical Reports* on the Affusion of Cold Water in Fever and other Disorders, which he subsequently gave to the world.”

The author of the memoir before us remarks, that however disposed Dr. Currie was to devote himself to professional or literary pursuits, the period was now arrived when it was impossible for a man of keen sensibility and deep reflection, to exclude the impression of public events from his thoughts; and that for some time the attention of this gentleman was absorbed by the rapidly-passing occurrences in a neighbouring kingdom, and their probable consequences on the fortunes of England. When perseverance in the war with France had been determined upon, in opposition, as he conceived, to the true interests of his country, he published the celebrated letter from *Jasper Wilson* to Mr. Pitt, which appeared in June, 1793, and of which it is said ten thousand copies were sold.

“Its reception was, in many respects, much more favourable than the writer had expected. It acquired a degree of celebrity, indeed, which has distinguished it from all similar productions of that day, and which, however deserved and however honourable, was the source of much uneasiness to the author.” “This letter was warmly admired by the opposition in parliament, and by all those who disapproved of the war; and its temper and spirit were spoken of with praise by many who disputed the author’s conclusions. It rests on unquestionable authority, that soon after it came out, it was favourably mentioned by Mr. Pitt himself, particularly that part of it which gives a kind of analysis of revolutions. It was ascribed to various persons; and to Mr. Sheridan, amongst other distinguished leaders of the opposition. By some it was considered the production of more than one hand; but Dr. Currie was the sole author. Mr. Wilberforce alone was acquainted with his intention of publishing, who certainly was not a convert to his opinions, but respected his motives, and promised to keep his secret—an engagement which, as far as this gentleman was concerned, there is every reason to believe was fulfilled.”

Dr. Currie gave a very strong proof of the effects produced upon his feelings by the political state of England at this period, in entertaining the idea—notwithstanding the high professional reputation and extensive practice he had obtained—the valuable friends and connexions he possessed, and the general respect and esteem he commanded, of quitting his country. To that effect he wrote, in July, 1793, to his kinsman in Virginia. But the idea seems

to have been transient; for in a letter to the same friend, dated little more than a year after, he says I shall stick to this country, whose government I venerate and respect, however much I have disapproved and deprecated the measures of its present administration. With the publication of Jasper Wilson commenced and ended Dr. C.'s political writings. He now endeavoured to withdraw his attention from public calamities "which he had foreseen, by which his feelings were deeply affected, but which it was out of his power to avert or alleviate," and began to carry into execution his intention of publishing the result of his professional experience in febrile diseases. "He had made considerable progress in doing so, when an event occurred, which, for a time, diverted his thoughts into a new channel, by which his literary reputation was some years afterwards widely extended." Allusion is here made to the death of the celebrated poet, Robert Burns, (which took place in July, 1796,) whose life Dr. C. undertook to write, so soon as his medical work should be finished and given to the world. The latter task was accomplished in the following year, (1797,) and the work appeared under the title of "*Medical Reports on the effects of Water, cold and warm, as a Remedy in Fever and other Diseases, whether applied to the Surface of the Body or used Internally.*"

"The success and sale of this work were probably equal to those of any medical publication of the present or past times. To this several causes contributed;—the previous reputation of the author; the novelty of the practice recommended; the modesty and caution with which it was announced; and the almost entire absence of those technical expressions, by which medical works are generally rendered unintelligible to all but members of the profession. Dr. Currie has succeeded in an extraordinary manner, in clothing professional details in a distinctness of phraseology and elegance of style, combined with a degree of feeling which gave to the *Medical Reports* an interest far beyond what might be looked for in a publication of that nature. The simplicity and candour, too, with which the unfavourable results of the practice are given, tend strongly to gain the confidence of the reader; and altogether it may be doubted whether any improvement in medical science was ever presented to the world in a more attractive garb."

The author of the memoirs enters into some details on the practical merits of the *Medical Reports*. As, however, he is not himself a professional man, his observations cannot be regarded as of sufficient interest and value to be noticed in this place. Nor shall we undertake to present our own views on the subject, persuaded as we are that our readers are already acquainted with the method of practice advocated in the work in question, and regarding the latter as one of those publications which should be in the hands of every practising physician. In reference to it, therefore, we shall only observe, that to the *discovery* of the remedial effects of cold affusions, Dr. Currie could lay, and indeed laid, no claim. So early as 1768 it was introduced into the West Indies by Dr. William Wright, of Edinburgh, whose account of it was first published in the *London Medical Journal*, for 1786, and in 1791 a general statement of its advantages, by the late Dr. Brandreth, of Liverpool, (the friend and colleague of Dr. Currie,) was inserted in Duncan's Commentaries. The use of cold water in ardent fevers, internally and by immersion, was also, as the biographer properly remarks, common among the ancients; but affusion on the surface of the body, as a remedy in fevers, seems to have been unknown to them. To Dr. Wright, he

adds, with whose narrative the Medical Reports commence, must be ascribed the honour of having introduced the cold affusion into notice in modern times. But we undoubtedly owe to Dr. Currie *the first specific directions for its safe application.*

Dr. Currie now commenced the task of writing the life and editing the works of Burns, which, as has been stated, he had undertaken to do. After encountering many obstacles, arising from the difficulty of obtaining the necessary information—the whole of which is minutely detailed in the volumes before us, Dr. Currie completed his task, and the work made its appearance in May, 1800, nearly four years after the death of Burns, under the title of “*The Works of Robert Burns; with an Account of his Life, and a Criticism on his Writings; to which are prefixed some Observations on the Character and Condition of the Scottish Peasantry;*” in 4 vols. 8vo.

“The completion of his toilsome task was repaid by general admiration of the manner in which it had been executed; and the obtaining £ 1200 from the booksellers for the family of Burns, amply compensated for many a sleepless night and weary hour. Testimonies of approbation poured in from every quarter, and his literary reputation became not inferior to his character and name as a physician.”

The family and intimate friends of Burns—those who may be supposed to have known him best and loved him most—expressed themselves perfectly satisfied; and at a time too, when, as the biographer remarks, the jealous sensibility of affection, assisted by the strength of comparatively recent recollections, must have naturally been strongly alive to any errors into which Dr. Currie might unconsciously have fallen. The work passed through four editions, of 2000 copies each, during the life-time of the author, and he died under the grateful impression that his benevolent exertions, and his disinterested sacrifice of time and health, had been crowned with entire success, and that the seal of public estimation had been affixed to his labours. How little did he anticipate that many years afterwards various admirers and biographers of Burns, (and among others his brother Gilbert Burns himself, whose letters in approval of the work are given in the memoirs before us,) would have appeared before the public, with the declared object of vindicating the memory of the poet from the exaggerations and misrepresentations affecting his character, which Dr. Currie is charged by them with having admitted into his life!!

Be this, however, as it may, the publication of this *Life* brought the author into epistolary correspondence with many literary men of celebrity, and among these with Sir Walter Scott, who wrote to him respecting his intended work, the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. Lord Cullen, son of Dr. Cullen, applied to him for assistance in writing the life of his father; and after the battle of Alexandria, the manuscript journal of General Moore, who fell afterwards at Corunna, was offered to him, with a wish that he would write the history of the campaign of Egypt. But these and other applications, neither his health nor his time would allow him to comply with.

About this time, England being threatened with invasion by the French, a call of patriotism was made on the inhabitants of the whole kingdom. Public meetings were held, and at that which took place at Liverpool Dr. Currie took an active part, and was one of the committee appointed on the occasion. This,

however, did not prevent him from interfering energetically in behalf of the French prisoners, who had been deprived of a portion of their rations, and were left without sufficient clothing. By his proceedings in this matter, he incurred the undisguised displeasure of government. Dr. Currie took an active part, in conjunction with his friend Mr. Roscoe, in the establishment of the *ATHENEUM*. He took a strong interest in the formation and opening of the *BOTANIC GARDEN*; and in 1801 he had the gratification of proposing and carrying by acclamation, in general vestry, a resolution, imperative on the church wardens and parish committee, for the immediate erection of a House of Recovery, or Fever Wards, for the reception of the poor when labouring under fever.

"The period was now arrived when Dr. Currie might consider himself in possession of those blessings which are usually thought to make life desirable. To the full enjoyment of these, however, health, the first of blessings, was unfortunately wanting. His early illness, of which an account has been given, and which his youth had enabled him to surmount, left him still liable to a recurrence of those symptoms, to which his constitution was predisposed; and scarcely a winter passed, in which he was not visited by severe inflammatory attacks, attended by cough and difficulty of breathing, for which he found venesection the only effectual though debilitating remedy. Alluding to these in one of his letters about this time, he says—'I have a sister under my roof, dying of a consumption—a disease by which three others of my sisters have been carried off, and to which I think it very probable I myself shall fall a victim. Many are the attacks I have parried. Certainly, I combat with some skill, and with coolness, but I expect a thrust through the lungs one day or other.'"

He was induced in the summer of 1802, to undertake, for the benefit of his health, a journey to Burton, in company with his friend Captain Graham Moore, who had returned from sea in bad health. But the weather being cold, wet, and windy, he derived little benefit from the journey. In May, 1804, he visited Scotland, with the hope that a journey in the open air might be of benefit to his health. In a letter, dated June 19th, 1804, he remarks, that from the month of October till May, he lost by venesection two hundred ounces of blood, and took at least eleven ounces of tincture of digitalis; that he could not otherwise have lived; but that his langour and oppression were not to be told. For a short while, however, after his return from Scotland, his health continued such as to give his friends the hope that it had experienced considerable improvement—a feeling which was encouraged by the circumstance, that his general appearance did not always convey the idea of illness, even when he was far from well. In August he was sent for by express to Manchester, in consequence of the fatal illness of Dr. Percival, and although in delicate health made several hurried visits on this melancholy occasion.

"This was the second instance of Dr. Currie's being summoned to Manchester to the death-bed of a much-valued friend and distinguished member of his own profession. In each case his exertions were followed by an illness of the most serious nature." "The extreme hurry and agitation which had marked his journeys to see Dr. Percival, and the strong interest which he had felt where so valuable a life was concerned, combined to assail an already enfeebled frame. He was again taken ill, and threatened with symptoms which excited the lively apprehensions of his family. Indeed, he was himself strongly impressed with the belief that if he passed the ensuing winter in Liverpool, the consequences would, in all probability, prove fatal. The choice of a milder residence, therefore, became the subject of his frequent considerations."

Having taken the advice of his friends in reference to the most eligible spot within the kingdom,—for he decidedly refused to go to a foreign country, Dr. Currie at the close of November, 1804, went by slow journeys, and accompanied by his daughter, to Clifton, and after a few days rest proceeded to Bath, where he remained a month. Here he appears to have received some benefit; for in a letter of 19th December to his friend Mr. Roscoe, he states, that on the general subject of his health he can speak satisfactorily—that he was benefited by the journey, though he caught cold in the course of it; but that this cold was gone off, and that with it his cough had in great measure disappeared. He proposed to return to Liverpool early in January; but at that time he suffered a relapse, and was in consequence unfit for the journey. Not enjoying all the quiet at Bath which he found necessary, he went to Clifton, where he passed this and the following month; making occasional visits to Bath of a day or two at a time—a plan which was attended with temporary benefit. He now found, however, that he had derived so very little advantage from his absence from Liverpool, as to make it a matter of great doubt whether he ought, in prudence again to expose himself to a northern climate; and the necessity of giving up every other consideration to the chance of regaining health, induced him finally to determine on making Bath the place of his future residence. This was effected in March, 1805. His reception at that place had always proved highly gratifying. By the members of the profession in general, he had been met with courtesy and respect—by some, especially by Dr. Falconer and Dr. Haygarth with friendly cordiality; he had been well received—his acquaintance had been even courted by the best society, both resident and casual, with which that city abounds; and on settling permanently in that place, he found no diminution of that notice and attention, which might before have been the result of kindness to a transient visitor. He fell at once into an easy and extensive practice, “and had soon reason to believe, that if his health were only restored, he might expect any success in his profession, which it was possible for one man to attain.” Dr. Currie seemed, for a short time, to be decidedly improved in health, but this state was not long maintained—his cough and oppression returned, and he suffered from want of rest. About this period of his life he composed an *Address to Sleep*, with the exception, as the biographer states, of the first stanza, which seems to have been written differently some years before.

“It is the only poetical production of his riper years, and was composed under circumstances, which would impart interest to a poem possessing even slighter claims to be admired.”

Dr. Currie's intention was to pass the hot months away from Bath. His journey was delayed, however, for two months, principally by his desire to complete the fourth edition of the *Medical Reports*, which had been long called for by the booksellers. At length early in August he quitted Bath preparing to be away a month or six weeks, and intending to coast along the south of England as far as Dover. But he was not able to proceed further than Sidmouth, where he arrived on the eleventh. On this day he grew worse, and expressed his opinion to his son, that he should never leave that place. His symptoms were gradually aggravated, but till a week previous to his death, his mental powers retained all their vigour.

“Ten days before he died, he dictated to the writer an account of his poli-

tical life and opinions, which will be found in the appendix, and which closes with the following passages, added in his own hand-writing. This is intended as a defensive document to be used if rendered requisite by any attack on my character or memory. On any thing that respects my memoirs, including the affair with Chalmers, I wish my loved and excellent friend Mr. Roscoe to be consulted. If health and engagements, or feelings stand in the way, I shall be quite happy to suppose myself in the hands of Dr. Aiken. To this excellent friend my last blessings! and to theirs!

"I am sick and exhausted. I hope to close my eyes in peace with the living generation, and with hope in the expected union with the friends whom I venerate and love, beyond the grave. Should any memoir be thought requisite of me, let it be short, and delicate to others."

*In the valley of the shadow of death*—so, as we learn from the biographer, Dr. C. expressed himself, he declared, that he felt neither tremors nor fears at the thought of futurity, and after long and severe sufferings which he bore with characteristic firmness, and with a patience which he *thought* and *hoped* would be an example to his family, he breathed his last on the 31st of August, 1805, at the age of forty-nine years and three months.

"His disease proved an enlargement of the heart, with incipient ossification of its adjoining vessels, accompanied by extraordinary wasting and adhesion of the right lung."

"The cast of his mind was grave and energetic, tinged with a secret, pensive melancholy, partly no doubt proceeding from temperament, but possibly strengthened by the asperity of his early fate, and by the incidents of his profession, acting on a heart of great feeling. While in no respect incapacitated by this disposition from engaging in the active duties to which he was called, he was led by it to find a charm in the private circle superior to the attractions of general society, and to indulge in those intellectual pleasures which memory or imagination can bestow. He was not lavish of confidence or profession; but the few who had his confidence and regard, possessed both very unreservedly.

"From nature he received an understanding of the first order, which was improved by study, enlarged by early intercourse with the world, and matured by observation and reflection. His knowledge of human nature was profound, and was evinced by his skill in the analysis of individual character. His reach of intellect was equal to the discussion of the most abstruse and difficult subjects of metaphysics, politics, or morals, and his views were clear, comprehensive and acute. He possessed uncommon powers of conversation, illustrating each topic with singular clearness, and with great strength and happiness of expression; and he had so much candour, was so entirely free from prejudice, and was such a master of reasoning, that it was difficult to converse with him seriously without improvement."

It appears from a letter addressed by Dr. Currie to Dr. Wright, that it was his intention to write upon gout and on insanity. But ill health and his numerous avocations prevented him from accomplishing that task. This is the more to be regretted, as those diseases require elucidation, and to the investigation of them "he was peculiarly fitted by his philosophical spirit of inquiry and his accuracy of observation."